



GRAPHIC HISTORY

THE SALEM WITCH TRIALS



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GRAPHIC HISTORY

The SALEM WITCH TRIALS

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Editor's note: Direct quotations from primary sources are indicated by italics.

Direct quotations appear on the following pages:

Pages 5, 23, from Samuel Parris' sermons, quoted in *A Delusion of Devils*

Pages 6, 21, from Cotton Mather's *Memorable Providences, Relating to the Witchcrafts and Possessions*

Pages 8, 11, 12, 24, from *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, edited by John F. Dunton

(University of Virginia Library. <http://etext.virginia.edu/salem>)

Page 25, from Increase Mather's "Cases of Conscience Concerning the Witchcrafts of 1692"

Delusion of Satan, Frances Hill (Doubleday, 1995).

Page 27, from Ann Putnam's apology in 1706, quoted in *A Delusion of Devils*

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Strange Behaviour in Salem

In the late 1600s, Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in New England, North America, were struggling in a new land. The Puritans had a strong faith in God and a strong fear of the devil. When things went wrong, the devil was often suspected.



In January 1692, two girls in Salem Village became strangely ill.

Betty Parris and Abigail Williams were having fits. They were the daughter and niece of Elizabeth Parris and Reverend Samuel Parris, the Salem Village minister.



Betty, are you ill?

Look at Abigail!
What's the matter
with these children?

Betty and Abigail's fits got worse. Several weeks later, the doctor was called.



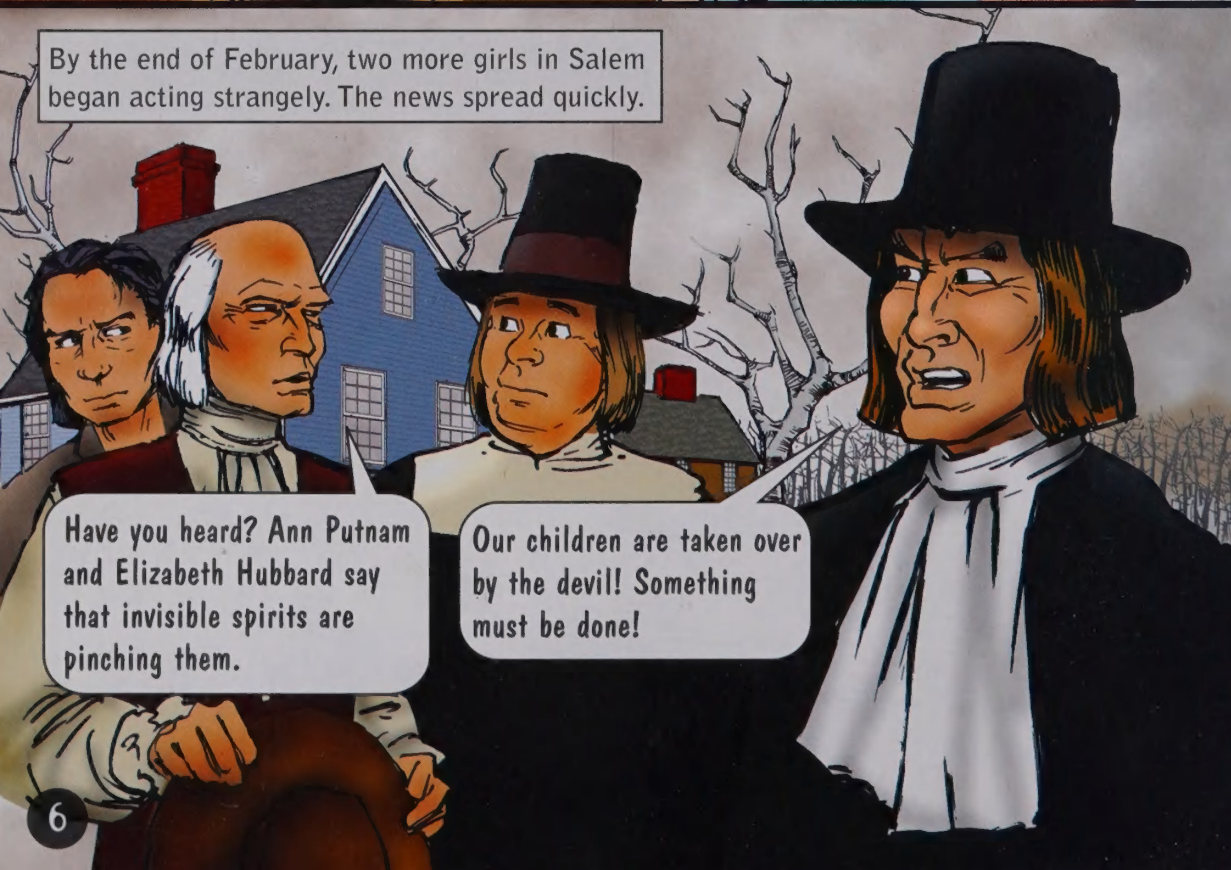
These children
must be under
an evil hand.

I fear the devil has been raised
amongst us and when he shall be
silenced the Lord only knows.

Puritans believed that witches could use the devil's power to harm people. About 14 people had been executed for witchcraft in New England already. Ministers like Cotton Mather warned others about witchcraft.



By the end of February, two more girls in Salem began acting strangely. The news spread quickly.





Elizabeth! Ann! What is causing these fits?

The spirits of Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne pinch and prick us.

And Parris' slave, Tituba! Her spirit hurts us, too!

No one else could see the spirits. But people believed the girls.



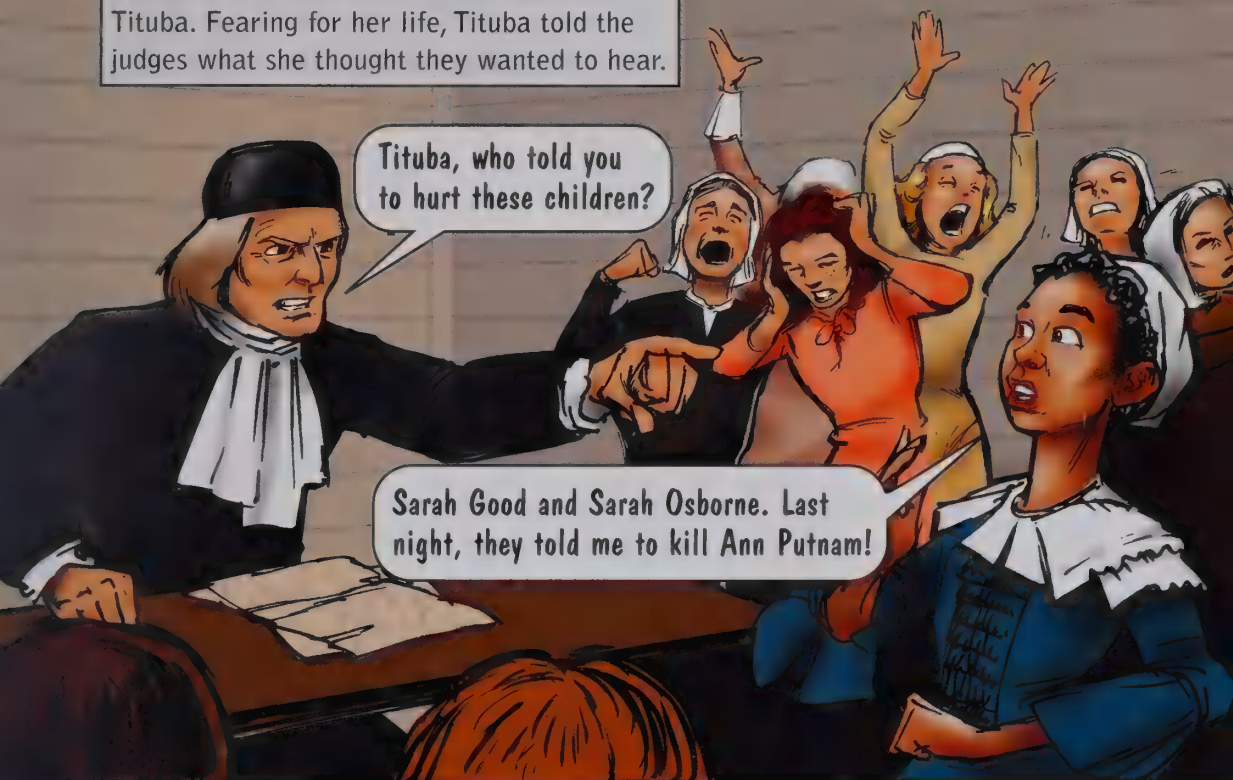
Sarah Good, you're under arrest for witchcraft!

What?

On 1 March, the three women named by the girls were questioned one by one. The whole village came to the hearings.



The girls broke out in fits when they saw Tituba. Fearing for her life, Tituba told the judges what she thought they wanted to hear.



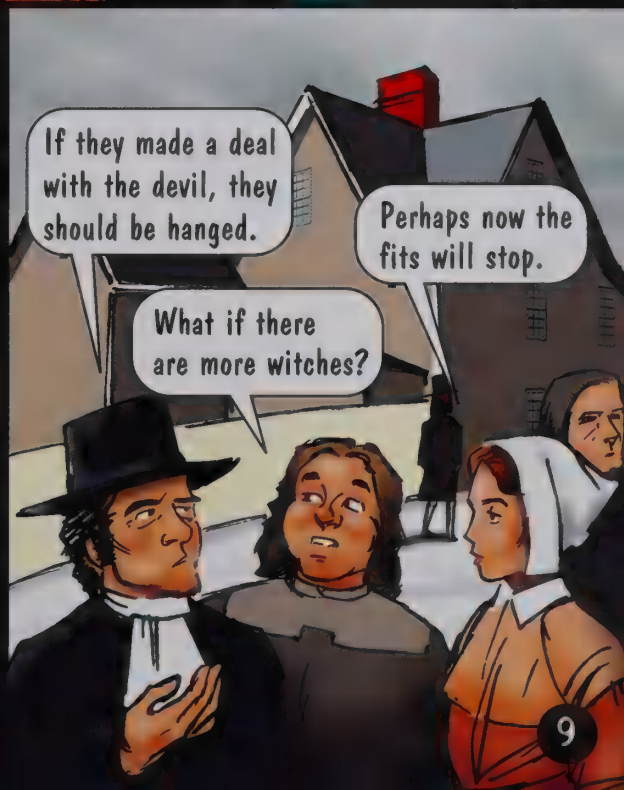
Tituba's cooperation did not free her. The judges sent all three women to jail to wait for their trials.



If they made a deal with the devil, they should be hanged.

Perhaps now the fits will stop.

What if there are more witches?



More Accusations

Even though the three accused witches were in jail, the girls' fits continued.

What's wrong, Ann?

It's Martha Corey's spirit, Mother. She's hurting me!

Abigail Williams backed up Ann's claim in church the following Sunday.

Look, there on the beam. It's Martha Corey's spirit!

Villagers were shocked. No one could believe that Martha Corey, a respected church member, was a witch.

A judge questioned Martha Corey after she was arrested the next day.

Why do you hurt these children?

I never had to do with witchcraft since I was born. I am a gospel woman.

You are a gospel WITCH!

See how Martha Corey controls their movements?

She must be a witch!

Send her to jail to join the others.

After John Proctor spoke out against the girls' claims, his wife, Elizabeth, was accused of witchcraft. At the hearing, Abigail Williams gave evidence.



She brought me the devil's book.

She said to write in it and I shall be well.

Dear child, it is not so.

Puritans believed that the devil made his followers sign a contract in his book. In return, he gave them witchcraft powers.

Family members of the accused witches were often suspected too.



Ann Putnam!
Who hurt you?

John Proctor, and his wife, too.



Despite Proctor's pleas, he and his wife were thrown into jail.



At first, Sarah Churchill had suffered fits and accused others of witchcraft. But later, she herself was accused of witchcraft.

Tell us the truth, Sarah.
You signed the devil's
book, did you not?

Yes, I did.

Who have you seen
acting as a witch?

Bridget Bishop.
She told me she
had killed a child.

Fearing for their lives, the accused would often confess to things they hadn't done, or offer names of other witches. Sarah Churchill was freed, probably because she had first been a victim of witchcraft.



Later, Sarah talked with a friend.

Sarah! What is bothering you?

I lied! I lied! I never signed the devil's book!

Then why did you tell the judges those things?

I had no choice. If I hadn't confessed, they would have thrown me in jail again. I would hang with the others.

The Trials

By the end of May, more than 60 people were awaiting trials, accused of witchcraft. The new governor created a special court to hear the cases. Witnesses spoke against Bridget Bishop, the first accused witch to be tried.



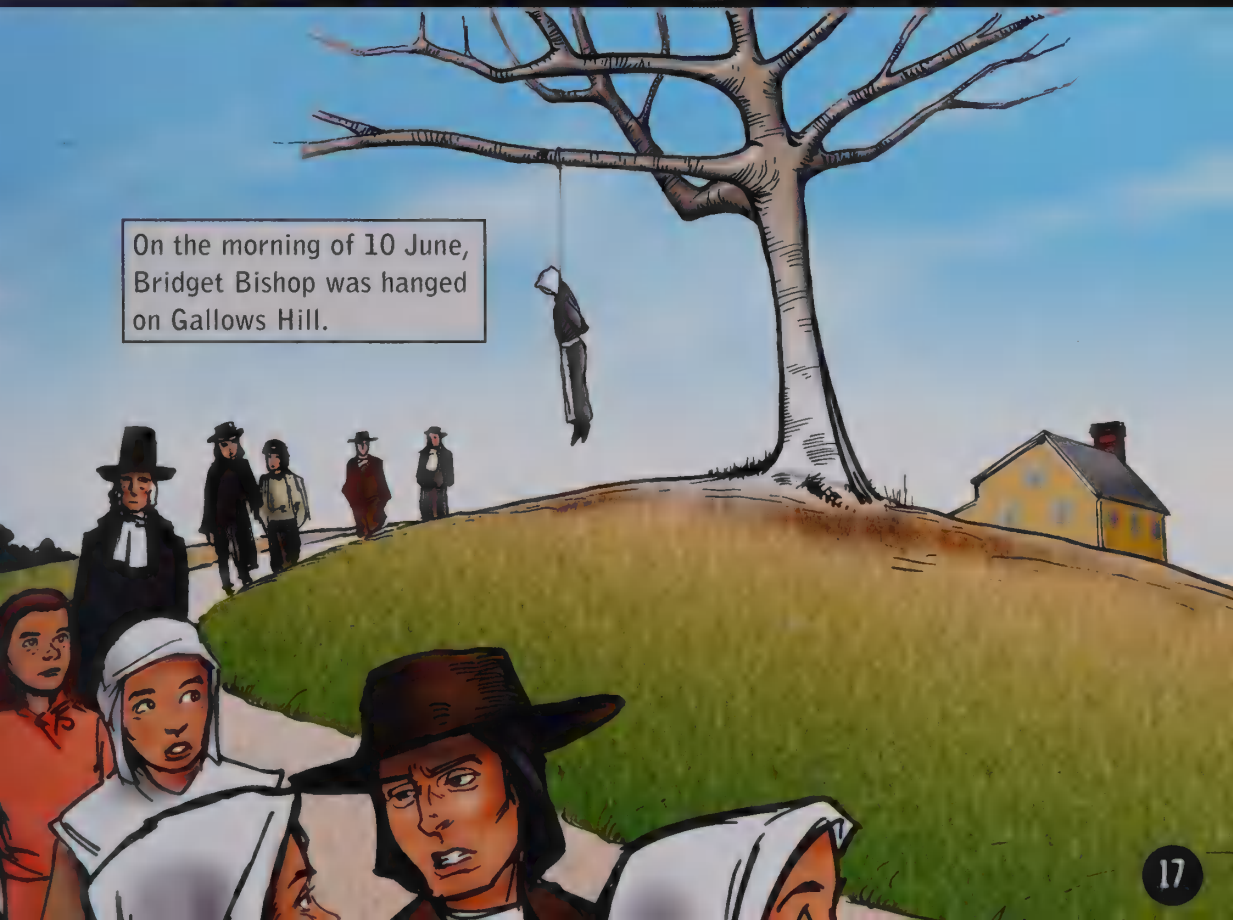
When I fixed her cellar wall, I found rag dolls with pins stuck in them.

That is clear evidence of witchcraft.

Every time Bridget looked at the girls, they all fell down, as if struck by unseen hands.

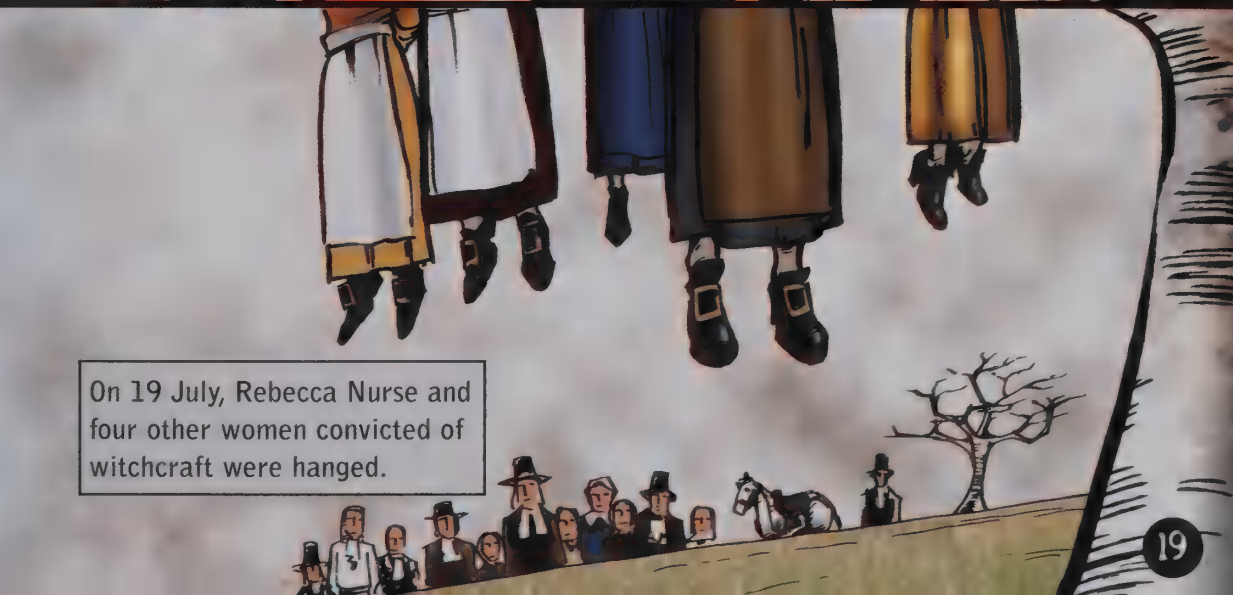
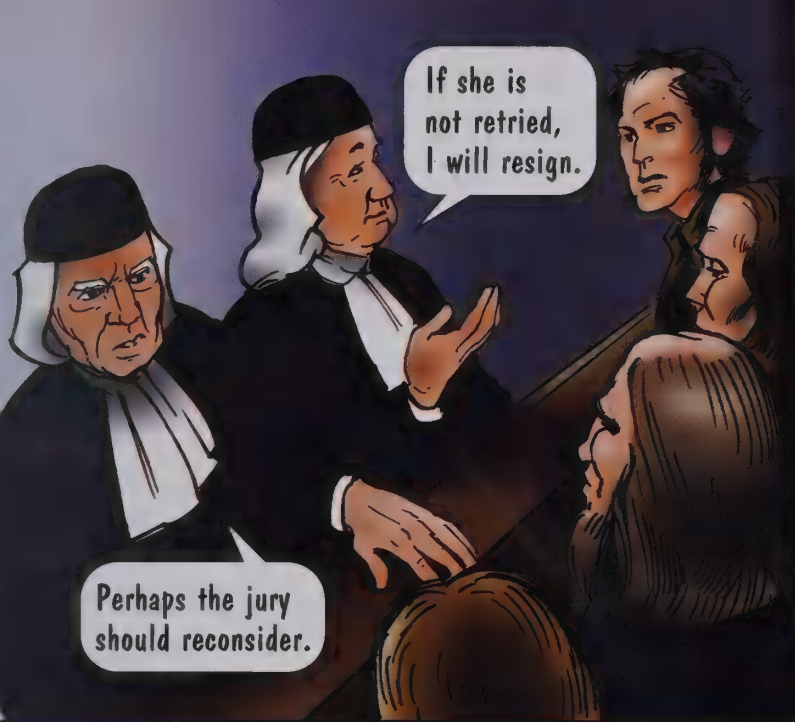


On the morning of 10 June, Bridget Bishop was hanged on Gallows Hill.



Rebecca Nurse, a gentle, respected woman, had been accused of witchcraft in March. At her trial in June, her reputation seemed to have saved her.





George Burroughs was a former Salem minister. He and the Putnams had fallen out when he lived in Salem. Ann Putnam accused him of causing the whole outbreak of witchcraft.



He's the leader of the witches.

We find you guilty of witchcraft and sentence you to hang.

One test used to tell whether someone was a witch was the Lord's Prayer. Puritans believed that a witch could not say the whole prayer without stumbling over the words.

The devil is telling him what to say.

... for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

But he doesn't seem to be in league with the devil.

Burroughs was hanged even though he said the whole prayer. Cotton Mather convinced the crowd that justice had been done.

The devil has often been transformed into an angel of light.



Five people convicted of witchcraft were hanged that day.



Witchcraft Hysteria

Fear gripped New England, creating mass hysteria. Whenever anyone became ill, witchcraft was suspected. People in nearby towns looked for witches, too. They sent for the girls from Salem.

I think we'll find witches in Andover. Do you?

Oh yes.

I think so.



In Andover alone, they identified 50 more witches.

Is this man making Joseph Ballard's wife sick?

Yes, the devil is whispering in his ear. He's doing Satan's work.

People like Reverend Parris talked of an all-out battle between good and evil.

Others were beginning to wonder about the accusers.

The devil will be making war with the lamb and his followers as long as he can.

How can they accuse people they don't even know?

What if the devil is making them accuse innocent people?

Back in Salem Village, Rebecca Nurse's sister, Mary Easty, was also accused of witchcraft. While waiting for her execution, she wrote the judges a letter.

*I know I must die and
my appointed time is set.
But I beg of you to
examine the afflicted
persons closely so that
no more innocent blood
is shed.*

Mary Easty

Mary Easty's letter was ignored. On 22 September, she and seven others were hanged on Gallows Hill.

These executions were the last. The public mood was rapidly changing.

By October, 20 people had been killed. More than 100 had been accused. People like Reverend Increase Mather, Cotton Mather's father, began to speak out against the witch trials.

It were better that ten suspected witches should escape, than that one innocent person should be condemned.



More people began to doubt the girls when they started accusing wealthy, powerful people. Some villagers believed the girls were faking their fits.

Now those girls have accused the governor's wife of witchcraft.

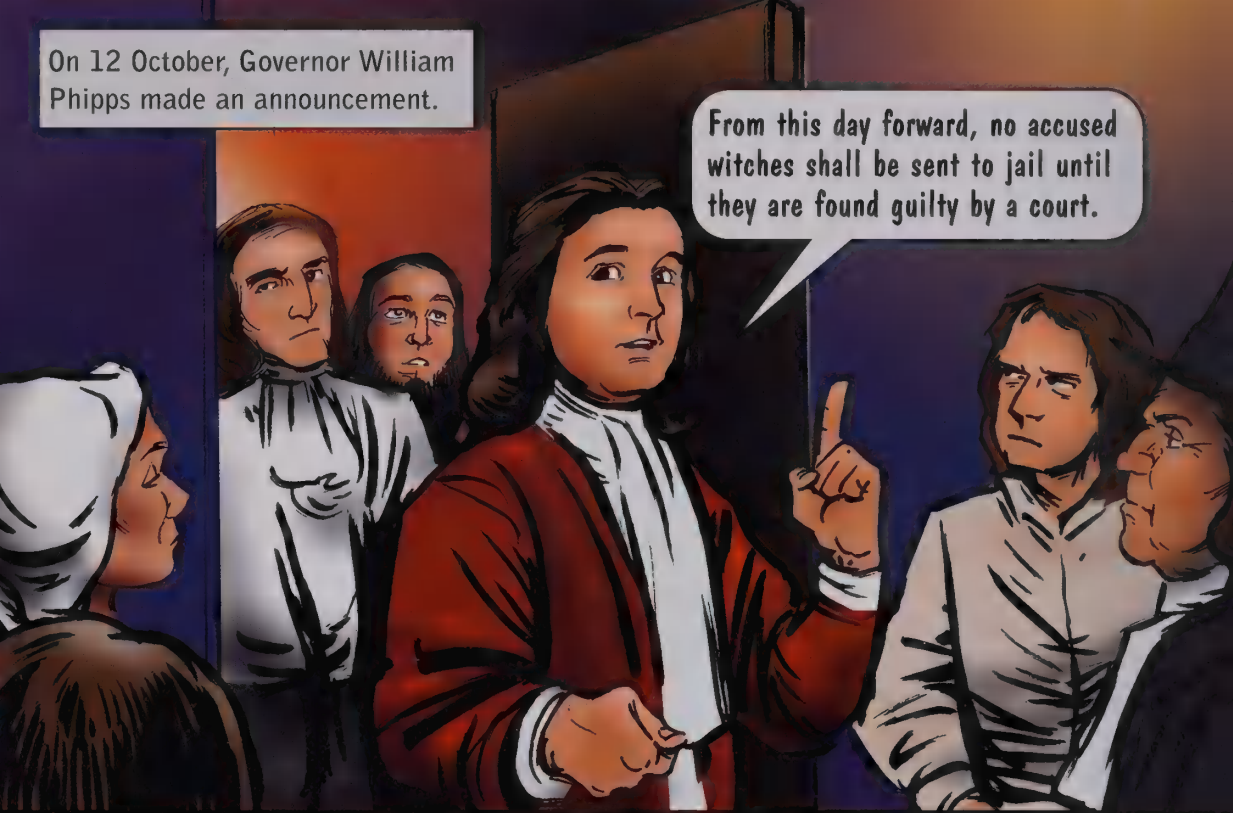
How can that be?
She is no witch.

Those girls must be stopped!



On 12 October, Governor William Phipps made an announcement.

From this day forward, no accused witches shall be sent to jail until they are found guilty by a court.



The following spring, Governor Phipps ended the witch trials for good.

The governor has freed all accused witches.

We are saved!



Fourteen years later, Ann Putnam apologized to the people of Salem.

Now I have good reason to believe that Rebecca Nurse and others were innocent and that it was a great delusion of Satan that deceived me in that sad time.

I earnestly beg forgiveness from God and from all whom I have given just cause for sorrow and offence.

The Salem witchcraft trials disrupted hundreds of lives. Years later, people regretted what had happened. Judge Samuel Sewall apologized for his part in the trials. The Massachusetts Bay Colony paid money to families of the victims. No action was ever taken against the accusers.

The Salem Witch Trials

* Salem witch trials statistics

Number of accusers:	19
Number of people arrested as witches:	about 150
Number of arrested people convicted:	28
Number of convicted people hanged:	19
Other deaths:	4 died in jail 1 man crushed to death

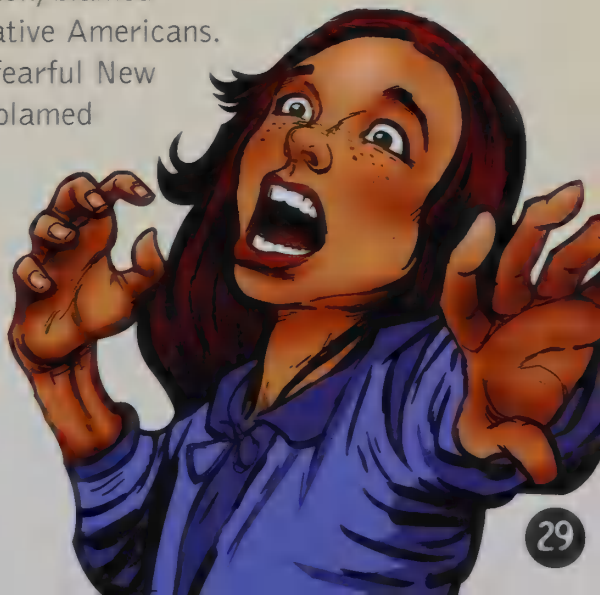
* Dates of hangings

10 June 1692	Bridget Bishop
19 July 1692	Sarah Good, Elizabeth Howe, Susannah Martin, Rebecca Nurse, and Sarah Wilds
19 August 1692	Reverend George Burroughs, Martha Carrier, George Jacobs, John Proctor, and John Willard
22 September 1692	Martha Corey, Mary Easty, Alice Parker, Mary Parker, Ann Pudeator, Wilmot Redd, Margaret Scott, and Samuel Wardwell

The Theories

For more than 300 years, historians have tried to explain what caused the witchcraft outbreak in Salem in 1692.

- * Writing shortly after the trials, Robert Calef thought the accusers were faking their acts. He blamed ministers like Cotton Mather for creating a climate of mass hysteria.
- * Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum believe that power struggles and family feuds made people accuse others of witchcraft.
- * Laurie Winn Carlson believed that a disease called encephalitis caused the girls' fits. The disease, spread by mosquitoes, can cause fever, confusion, and seizures.
- * Chadwick Hansen thought that some people in Salem really did practise witchcraft, and people were very afraid of it.
- * Bernard Rosenthal argued that the stories of witchcraft were made up. His reasons included jealousy, getting rid of personal enemies, and people truly believing in witches.
- * A recent historian, Mary Beth Norton, blamed the climate of fear on wars with Native Americans. When the wars began going badly, fearful New Englanders searching for a reason blamed witchcraft.



Glossary

afflicted affected by a disease or condition, such as witchcraft

execution act of putting someone to death as punishment for a crime

hearing meeting held by judges to see if there is enough evidence to hold a trial

Lord's Prayer prayer said by Christians. This prayer appears in the Bible.

mass hysteria overwhelming fear or panic felt by many people at one time

Puritans group of Protestants in England during the 1500s and 1600s who wanted simple church services and enforced a strict moral code. Many Puritans fled England and settled in North America.

Internet Sites

school.discoveryeducation.com/schooladventures/salemwitchtrials/

On this website, you can read about the story of the witch hunt and some of the key people involved.

www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/previous_seasons/case_salem/index.html

On this website, you'll find an interactive map of Salem Village, with information on all the main characters and a timeline of events. Click on the "View questions for students" link to test yourself on what you've learned.

Find Out More

Salem Witch Trials: Colonial Life (American History Through Primary Sources), Sean Price (Raintree, 2008)

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You Wouldn't Want to Be a Salem Witch!: Bizarre Accusations You'd Rather Not Face, Jim Pipe and David Salariya (Franklin Watts, 2009)

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In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692, Mary Beth Norton (Alfred A. Knopf, 2002)

Memorable Providences Relating to Witchcraft and Possession, Cotton Mather (Edinburgh, 1697)

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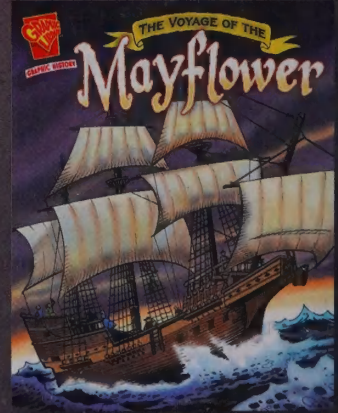
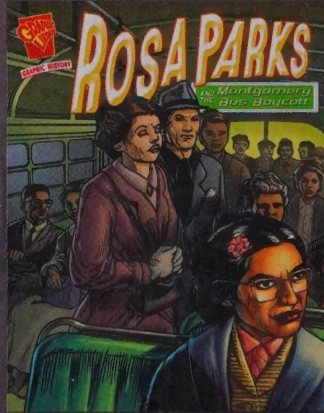
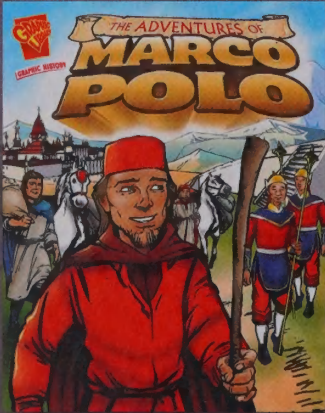
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In 1692, two girls in the village of Salem began to have strange fits. People thought that they were possessed by the devil. Read this true story to find out about the terrifying events that followed, including the hangings of 20 people accused of witchcraft.

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